9 February 2018

Dear members of the energy community,

On January 21st the MIT Energy Conference released this year’s line-up of speakers and panelists for the March 2-3 conference. Included in this list was Dr. Mark Jacobson, an engineering professor at Stanford University and director of its Atmosphere/Energy Program. On September 29th, 2017 Dr. Jacobson filed a lawsuit in D.C. Superior Court against Dr. Christopher Clack and the National Academy of Sciences on counts of defamation, breach of contract, and promissory estoppel in response to a publication made in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Since announcing the conference content, some people, often nuclear energy supporters, have expressed resistance to Dr. Jacobson’s participation, often claiming he is using litigation to silence academic criticism.

The MIT Energy Conference Managing Directors want to make the following clear. As PhD students ourselves, we do not condone lawsuits as a mechanism for settling academic differences. Still, we make no claims and take no stance over whether Dr. Jacobson’s lawsuit is over academic differences or other issues. Rather, we recognize there is a lively debate in the energy space on the future role of clean energy and that Dr. Jacobson is a prominent voice in that space. Further, we feel disputed topics force members of an audience to think more deeply about the issue and form their own opinions.

Moving forward, we look forward to Dr. Jacobson’s talk believing that he has much to add to this year’s energy discussion. However, to give more time to other, opposing views on the path to decarbonization, we’ve invited MIT’s own Jesse Jenkins to address conference attendees and share his thoughts. We hope this will produce a balanced perspective and enhance the value of the conference overall.

Sincerely,

Alan Long
Co-Managing Director
aelong@mit.edu

Ryan Shaw
Co-Managing Director
ryanshaw@mit.edu